

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 PM-09 INR-09 L-03 NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3963

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 4033

E. O. 11652; GDS

TAGS: GW, NATO, PFOR, PARM

SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER'S REMARKS ON MBFR

1. DURING A LUNCHEON DISCUSSION WITH DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER MARCH 16, HE TOLD THE AMBASSADOR HE IS CONVINCED THAT NO GERMAN GOVERNMENT COULD ACCEPT A STATIONED FORCE REDUCTION IN AN MBFR AGREEMENT WHICH DID NOT PROVIDE FOR SOME KIND OF COMPENSATORY REDUCTION IN DOMESTIC FORCES. LEBER EMPHASIZED THAT THIS PROBLEM IS CAUSING HIM MORE CONCERN AND HE WANTED TO EXPLAIN HIS VIEWS BEFORE THE US POSITION ON THE ISSUE BECOMES FINAL.

2. LEBER THOUGHT THAT STATIONED FORCE REDUCTIONS BY THE US AND USSR COULD CAUSE REDUCTIONS BY SOME OF THE SMALLER NATO ALLIES. IF THIS HAPPENED, GERMANY COULD FIND ITSELF THE SOLE SUPPORTER OF UNCHANGED FORCE LEVELS IN A PERIOD OF DETENTE. AS THE EUROPEAN COUNTRY WITH THE LARGEST FORCES IN NATO, THE GERMANS WOULD FIND THEMSELVES EASY TARGETS FOR COMMUNIST PRO-
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PAGANDA FOCUSING ON " FRG REVANCHISM," ETC.

3. LEBER EMPHASIZED, MOREOVER, THAT DEFENSE COSTS ARE RISING EACH YEAR. AFTER AN MBFR STATIONED FORCE REDUCTION, THE FRG IS LIKELY TO FIND HIGHER DEFENSE BUDGETS NECESSARY, JUST TO MAINTAIN THE SAME LEVEL OF STANDING FORCES. HE THOUGHT THAT NO FRG DEFENSE MINISTER COULD MAINTAIN SUCH A POSITION IN THE FACE OF LIELY PUBLIC PRESSURES FOR DEFENSE BUDGET CUTS AND THE BUNDESWEHR WOULD ALMOST SURELY BE REDUCED. IN THIS REGARD, LEBER POINTED OUT THAT THE BRANDT GOVERNMENT AT PRESENT IS UNDER INCREASING PRESSURE TO RAISE THE DOMESTIC SOCIAL SERVICE BUDGET.

4. COMMENT: LATEST INDICATIONS WERE THAT ROTH, FRG COMMISSIONER FOR DISARMAMENT, WAS WINNING HIS TUG- OF- WAR WITH THE DEFENSE MINISTRY OVER THE STATIONED VS INDIGENOUS FORCE REDUCTION PROPOSALS. LEBER' S WORRIES CENTER ON THE CRITICAL QUESTION OF WHETHER THE EUROPEANS WILL BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN THEIR FORCES WITHOUT REDUCTIONS IF STATIONED FORCES ONLY ARE REDUCED AS A RESULT OF AN MBFR AGREEMENT. HE APPEARED TOTALLY CONVINCED THAT STATIONED FORCE REDUCTIONS WILL CREATE A CLIMATE OF DETENTE WHERE PUBLIC OPINION WILL SIMPLY NOT SUPPORT UNDIMINISHED DEFENSE EXPENDITURES. IN THIS SITUATION, LEBER BELIEVED THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT WOULD BE FORCED TO MAKE UNILATERAL TROOP CUTS AND, IN LEBER' S VIEW, A SERIOUS EROSION OF THE ALLIANCE' S STRENGTH WOULD BEGIN.
HILLENBRAND

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*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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